

MARRIAGE ISKCON STYLE – NOT SRILA PRABHUPADA'S ISKCON
By Bhakta John Jagannatha



Bhaktin Maria and Parasurama in Lake Huntington, 1981

For Bhaktin Maria -
You are always in my heart and in my prayers.

I want to tell you the story of Bhaktin Maria. She was just your typical little girl born in the slums of Puerto Rico. Poorly educated. Poorly fed. Poorly clothed. Humble beginnings to say the least.

Her mother was an alcoholic drug user who slept with whatever man was available. She had many children from many different men. I believe the current euphemism is "baby daddy". I call them low-lifes. They are not real men. They are not even human. But that is just MY opinion.

Bhaktin Maria was the eldest. By the time of her 12th birthday her womanly beauty was starting to reveal itself in her maturing body. The bums hanging around her mother started to notice. Immediately and without provocation Bhaktin Maria was kicked out of her envious mother's house and left to fend for herself on the streets.

Bhaktin Maria took shelter of her mother's sister. Her aunt was cut from the same nasty cloth as her sister. She was a part-time stripper in a local night club. And a part time prostitute. She took money from men, including relatives, for sex.

Some shelter. Any port in a storm.

Her aunt saw dollar signs in Bhaktin Maria. She wanted to train the little girl in the ways of the stripper and prostitute. When her niece balked at the idea and resisted the advances of the whore mongers that regularly visited her aunt, she was kicked to the curb once again.

Bhaktin Maria was around 14 years old
when the greatest thing and the worst thing happened.

ISKCON had opened a preaching center in her neighborhood. She met the devotees on harinama. She was attracted and she followed them to the temple and stayed. She learned the maha mantra - hare krishna hare krishna krishna hare hare rama hare rama rama rama hare hare. She learned the ways of the vaisnava devotee of Lord Krishna and lived them. She found some real happiness. She experienced a higher taste.

That was the greatest thing.

Then the worst "thing"!

I want to be diplomatic and say this beautiful little child of Krishna was "impregnated" but I am no diplomat.

What I really must say is RAPED!

No fourteen year old child has the mental or emotional capacity to fully comprehend all of the consequences of the sex act. But an adult full grown man does. And so I say she was raped by a disciple of Srila Prabhupada. She was taken advantage of by a man in full knowledge of the consequences. A man who was supposed to be a vaisnava devotee of the Lord.

He was a WORM.

And she became pregnant. At fourteen.

She went to the temple authorities.

YOU WILL NEVER GUESS WHAT HAPPENED

She was kicked out of Krishna's temple.

Homeless once again. And now pregnant.

AT FOURTEEN YEARS OLD.

Her only recourse was to now take shelter of the worst of her family. She went to her mother's mother. Her grandmother. She took her in.

She had her own solution to the pregnancy.

She laid the poor tiny girl down on a concrete floor, on her back, and jumped up and stomped on her belly with all her might. She mercilessly ground her nasty foot on the belly of her own granddaughter. She stomped with all of her demonic force crushing her own great-grandchild. She stomped on the tiny baby spirit soul.

She murdered. She murdered a human being.

Just...like...that...

Bhaktin Maria was never the same after such a traumatic event. Physically, emotionally, mentally, but most of all spiritually, she was scarred for the rest of her life. Even to this day she still suffers great physical pain.

But she had found Krishna and she could not forget Him. She managed to stay alive and at the age of 16 she moved to the maha temple in NYC.

That is where I first met her. The first time that I saw her I knew I would marry her. I even prayed to Krishna to let her be my wife. We never spoke to each other the entire time that we lived at Radha Govinda Mandir. Except for one time when I was serving out the Sunday Love Feast and I served her and she smiled at me. That was our only intimate contact.

Not a single word, not even a haribol. Just a smile.

And then she was gone.

I didn't know where and I wasn't about to go beyond my little universe known as the Bhakta Program and ask any authority what happened to that cute little bhaktin. I had a good idea of what kind of "YOU ARE IN MAYA!" speech I could expect. But I didn't stop praying to my Lord Jagannatha for that one boon.

After a while I blooped. They would have been right, I guess, about the maya stuff. I fell down and left. After a month of tasteless nonsense I came back.

After serving for a few months in New York I was sent by the GBC to the temple in the hills of Puerto Rico. The idea was to get me as far away from my hometown NYC and hopefully I would keep out of maya.

And it worked. Once I got over the shock of going from a giant temple full of hundreds of devotees in the midst of the busiest city on earth to a tiny temple with just a handful of bhaktas on top of a hill in the middle of the jungle I fit right in and took up my devotional

practices with new relish and full force. We even endured a two week long marathon of 24/7 construction in the temple room by most of the assembled vaisnavas to prepare for the arrival of Sri Sri Krishna and Balarama and Sri Sri Radha Syamasundara.

But there was definitely an undercurrent of just plain weirdness in the atmosphere. You know what I mean?

Especially if you were trained up properly in the Bhakta Program. You knew vaisnava etiquette and the offenses to be avoided and how the morning and evening programs should be if the proper rules and regulations in worshipping the deities are followed. Standards of cleanliness in the kitchen and temple room. Apparently those standards just weren't as important in Puerto Rico. Then again, I was probably spoiled by the first class training I was fortunate to receive from the Bhakta Program in NYC.

(Kudos to Damodara and Niranjana. HARIBOL!)

Something was just not right but I could not put my finger on it. For one thing, just about everyone there couldn't wait to get out of there, to go to some other temple, wherever that temple was didn't matter, as long as they weren't in Puerto Rico. I couldn't understand it. It was so beautiful there. Mode of goodness all the way.

After a few months of living and breathing the daily life of the humble sadhaka there was a Sunday Love Feast. And the bhaktin of my prayers appeared.

It was her. Bhaktin Maria.

She had found her way back to her whore aunt's home in PR after once again being shunned by her own mother who had moved to NYC. Her aunt wanted nothing to do with Bhaktin Maria unless she would become a ho. So the aunt decided the best thing would be to take her up into the hills far away from her house and dump her off at the Krishna temple.

That is where Bhaktin Maria wanted to go anyway so it was settled and the aunt brought her there and left. Bhaktin Maria had only the clothes she was wearing. Nothing else.

Just before her aunt left she told the bhaktin one thing.

"You should stay here now because your husband is inside the temple." And then the aunt was gone.

After a few days, when it became apparent that Bhaktin Maria was staying, I made up my mind (friend or enemy?) that I would not waste the opportunity that Krishna had arranged. The first chance that I had, one early morning after the mangala arotik, I approached her on the road leading to the temple and spoke with her. She was very shy and would not even look me in the face. I knew right there and so did she. We were inseparable after that first time conversation.

Yes. It was maya. You don't have to tell me that. I know it. I knew it. We fell down. We were ashamed.

We could not hide our affection for each other and our relationship was soon discovered. We confessed. And we stopped any illicit relations. But I made it clear to the Temple President that I wanted to marry her. After a phone call from the GBC we were given "permission" to marry.

As if a grown man and woman need anyone's permission.

Although, when I spoke with the GBC man, I was told point blank that they did not approve of my methods. Also, a snide remark concerning her given name of Maria Magdalena was passed along, that my "guru"(sdg) was informed and he was also not pleased, but it was all ok now as long as we followed what temple authorities asked of us.

Not a word was mentioned about her past association with the Puerto Rico Yatra.

I thought that wasn't so bad. The worst has passed. Now we can get married and start a new life in the grihastha ashrama. Just the four of us - Srila Prabhupada, Krishna and Bhaktin Maria and I.

"Fairy tales can come true it can happen to you..."

We served Krishna together. Bhaktin Maria assisted me in all my menial tasks and I assisted her. We were a very good service team. We lived in the different ashrama buildings on the property. All was idyllic in our Krishna Conscious lives.

But I should have known. It was too good to be true.

Before we got married the GBC representative for New York and Puerto Rico, etc... came to visit. He brought with him what can only be described as a harem of young nubile bhaktins. At least a half dozen newly minted servants of his holiness(?). They all attended to his every need.

But when they weren't busy with his service they were always buzzing around me like giant flies wherever I went.

"Can I help with that prabhuji? Please, let me get that for you prabhu? Oh, its no trouble at all. Don't be silly. You look tired. Let me get a nice big cushion for you to rest on Prabuji. Prabuji, prabhuji, prabhuji please let me serve you? You chant so nicely. Please chant for me?"

They were all about my age. They were all from my neck of the woods in Queens, NYC. They all spoke my language, as it were. What I mean to say is they were white like me. Bhaktin Maria was a dark brown Puerto Rican.

The intent was quite obvious to myself and to my future wife. They were trying to break us up by tempting me with all these ladies. It did not work as I only had eyes for my fiance.

Then one day, after myself and Bhaktin Maria were finished cleaning the kitchen after the morning prasadam was served, I was told by one of the "harem" bhaktins that the GBC wanted to speak to me in the temple president's office.

What struck me as unusual was that there was not a man to be seen in the temple room or in the hallway in front of the temple room nor on the veranda outside. I soon found out the reason why.

I went to the TP's office and knocked on the closed door.

I heard the GBC man say enter and I opened the door and stepped inside.

Directly facing the door was the GBC man seated behind the TP'S desk. To his right and seated just behind him was the TP. His head was down and he would not look at me. Packed into the little room was every single man and boy that happened to be in the temple at that time. Residents, guests, visitors - every male body in the vicinity was jammed in there to see the show. Faces I did not know and who did not know me were staring at me.

Witnesses to the execution.

I was told to sit. I sat directly in front of the GBC and the TP. And then it began.

With his bony ghostly-white finger pointing in my face this phony transcendentalist just starting verbally blasting away at me. "You *#@#* *&%#@*", you are this and you are that and you are every other thing that is worse than this and that!!!"

The word repeated most frequently with the most venom and the only one that keeps on repeating itself like a hellish echo in my memory is "duplicitous".

DUPLICITOUS! DUPLICITOUS! DUPLICITOUS!

And it went on and on for what seemed like an eternity. All the strange, unfeeling eyes burning holes in me while hurtful words were spewed and spat unceasingly in my face. But I kept my composure. I probably turned every shade of red and purple that can be imagined. My body felt like it was on fire and ready to explode in one swift leap across the little desk and on top of that scumbag of a living entity and choke the life from his worthless carcass.

But I did not.

And it is amazing what Krishna allows you to remember and what He allows you to forget. All I did to keep it together was this thought. It wasn't my thought. It was Krishna's.

One finger pointed at me, three fingers pointed back at you.

That is all. Right then I knew he was a phony and I should just persevere. And I did.

When I was allowed to leave the room I made up my mind right there to get as far away from there with Bhaktin Maria as possible. I immediately wrote home asking my mother for laxmi to get away. But I had to wait for a response.

But the GBC was not finished. Not by a long shot.

A few days later, after another Sunday Love Feast, I was cleaning the kitchen as usual except without Bhaktin Maria. Under false pretense she was told she needed to do some sort of service on the veranda on the opposite end of the temple from the kitchen.

AND YOU WILL NEVER GUESS WHAT HAPPENED

Somehow or other the WORM showed up on the veranda and tried to convince Bhaktin Maria...

TO MARRY HIM!!!

Now I ask you, what do you think are the chances, that out of the black, from nowhere, this particular individual low-life scum would slither out from whatever dark and slimy rock he was under, to propose marriage to the little girl he defiled years ago?

You don't have to raise your hands. I will tell you.

NONE. NADA. ZILCH. ZERO.

It was all arranged by our loving GBC.

Bhaktin Maria spat on him and then came to the kitchen and stayed with me and served with me. After we finished cleaning she told me what had transpired.

What I did next is shameful and offensive and I pray that Srila Prabhupada and Krishna will forgive me someday.

I STOLE KRISHNA'S LAXMI.

Just enough for plane fare and we left asap.

We were married for 21 years and, in spite of the weakened condition of her body due to her grandmother's method of abortion, we were blessed by Krishna with 3 beautiful children.

Bhaktin Maria suffered all through our time together from the results of her brutal childhood. We are no longer together because her maladies - mental, emotional, psychological and physical - eventually got the worst of her. At present she receives constant 24/7 care in a hospital type facility where she will live out the rest of her time on this planet.

I know all the names of the guilty parties involved but I have refrained from naming them. Their names are right there along with mine on the yamaduta appointment list.

IN LOVING MEMORY

MOTHER MARIA MAGDALENA RODRIGUEZ BAEZ DE STAYTON

By Bhakta John Jagannatha



Mother Maria attending a Vaisnava wedding

It is with a mixture of sadness and relief that I inform the Vaisnavas of the passing of a very sweet, very humble devotee of the Lord, Bhaktin Maria. The sadness is to be expected when a loved one leaves us and transmigrates to their next body. The relief is for the end to the suffering of the diseased material body she inhabited until recently.

Bhaktin Maria loved the Vaisnavas and Srila Prabhupada and Sri Sri Panca Tattva and Sri Sri Radha Govinda and Their Lordships Jagannatha, Baladeva and Lady Subhadra.

Mother Maria was and is a devotee of the Supreme Lord. Mother Maria was a loving wife and mother and grandmother. We served the Lord together as husband and wife for over 20 years. I beg Bhaktin Maria's forgiveness for all my offenses and mistakes and my just plain ignorance.

Bhaktin Maria chanted the Holy Names of the Lord: *HARE KRISHNA HARE KRISHNA KRISHNA KRISHNA HARE HARE / HARE RAMA HARE RAMA RAMA RAMA HARE HARE*.

Bhaktin Maria served the Vaisnavas and Srila Prabhupada and the Deities in many different temples. She performed loving devotional service in the Maha temple at 340

West 55th Street in Manhattan, New York City, and in the ISKCON temples in Puerto Rico, Miami Beach, Lake Huntington, Gita Nagari, Brooklyn and 26 2nd Avenue.

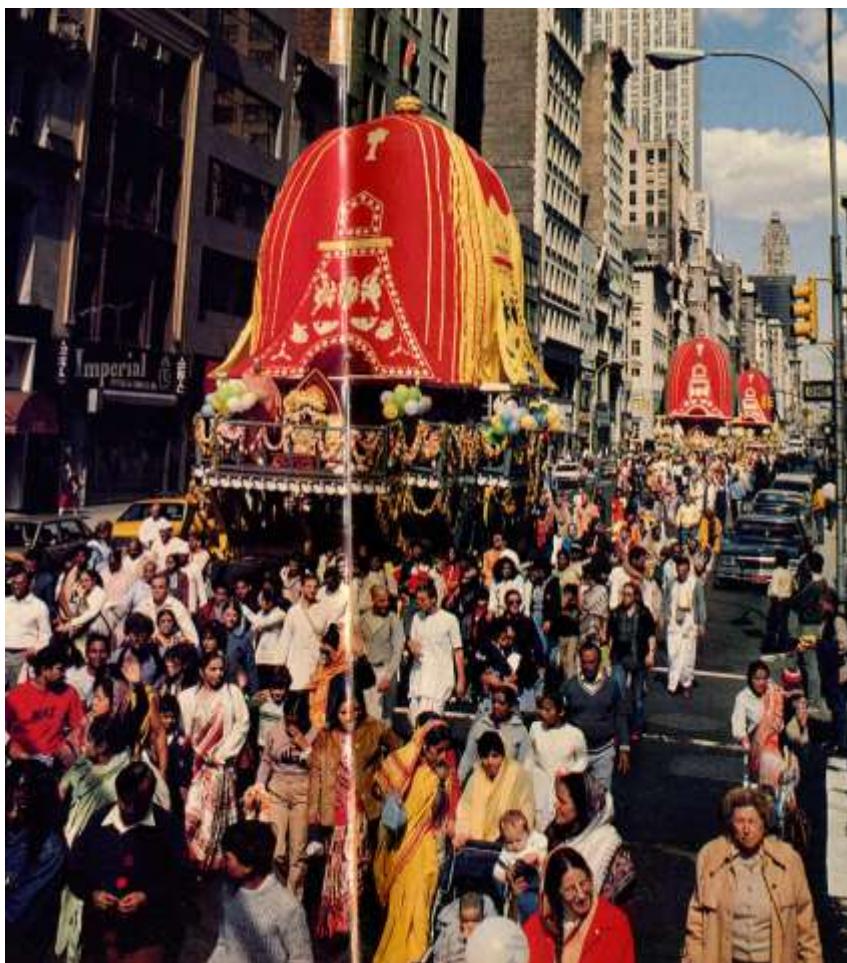
I want to share with you some pictures for transcendental memory's sake. I believe the photos speak much more succinctly regarding Mother Maria's sweet nature and happiness in Krishna consciousness than any sentiments that I may express.

Hare Krishna.

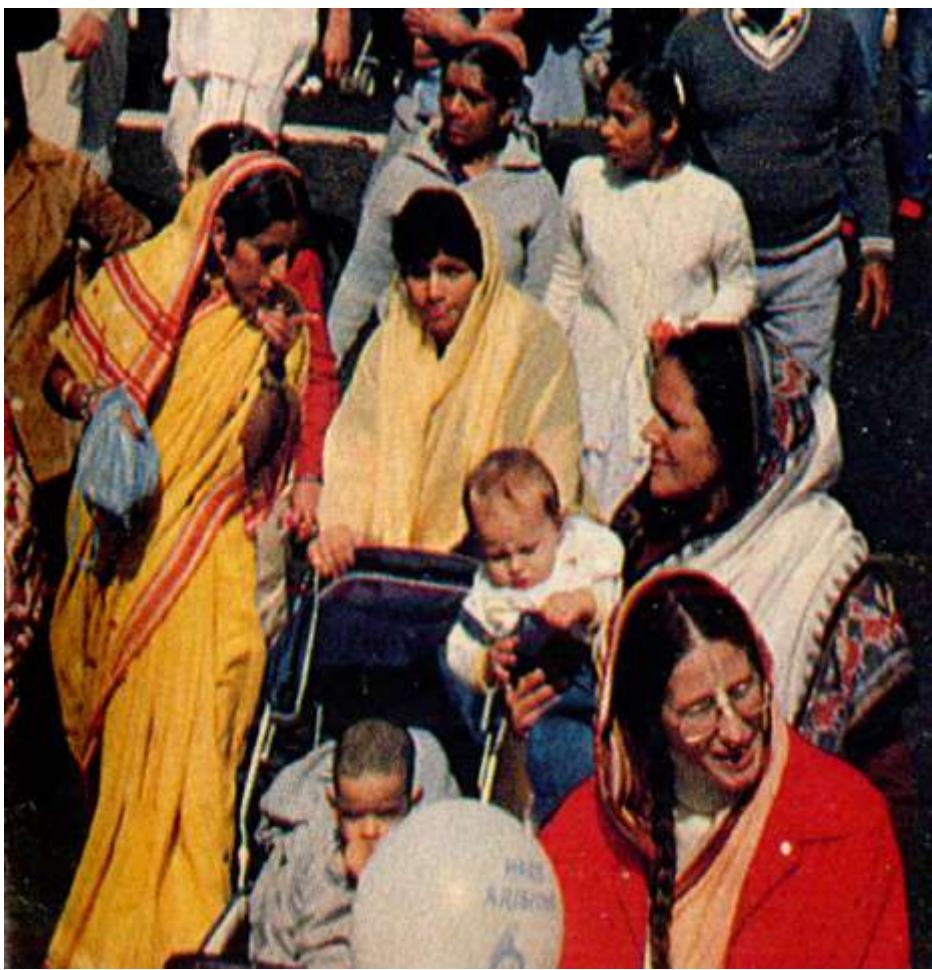
From friends -

"I remember her from the hilltop in Gurabo, Puerto Rico and Brooklyn, New York. She chanted and heard the holy name, heard the Srimad Bhagavata, tasted prasada, worshipped Tulasi. Surely a human life spent in activities that will help the soul get closer to Bhagavan's lotus feet in the future. Kali Yuga is wrought with faults, but she got some exposure to Bhagavan Sri Krishna's name."

"May Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu and the Vaisnavas bless her."



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Mother Maria parading with Parasurama in stroller [from above]



Mother Maria and Parasurama in Lake Huntington, 1981



Mother Maria and Parasurama in Lake Huntington 1981



Matchless Gifts 26 2nd Avenue New York City 1990's



NYC Ratha Yatra Washington Square Park 1990's

“The Blessed Lord said: While speaking learned words, you are mourning for what is not worthy of grief. Those who are wise lament neither for the living nor the dead.”

(Bhagavad-gita As It Is, Chapter 2, Text 11)

“As the embodied soul continually passes, in this body, from boyhood to youth to old age, the soul similarly passes into another body at death. The self-realized soul is not bewildered by such a change.” *(Bhagavad-gita As It Is, Chapter 2, Text 13)*

“For the soul there is never birth nor death. Nor, having once been, does he ever cease to be. He is unborn, eternal, ever-existing, undying and primeval. He is not slain when the body is slain.” *(Bhagavad-gita As It Is, Chapter 2, Text 20)*

“As a person puts on new garments, giving up old ones, similarly, the soul accepts new material bodies, giving up the old and useless ones.” *(Bhagavad-gita As It Is, Chapter 2, Text 22)*



NYC Ratha Yatra Washington Square Park 1990's

“One can understand the Supreme Personality as He is only by devotional service. And when one is in full consciousness of the Supreme Lord by such devotion, he can enter into the kingdom of God.” (*Bhagavad-gita As It Is, Chapter 18, Text 55*)

Vaya con Krsna, mi amor.
Bhakta John Jagannatha

So Much Better
By Bhakta John Jagannatha



I wrote this the other day when I was sitting at home and watching my youngest and his lady interacting while they were cooking their dinner. It made me remember my ex and how it was to be with the woman I loved so long ago. Don't worry. I am not sad. I am just expressing in words a little of how it felt being alive and in love.



when you love each other
you move together
without thinking
natural
to be with someone
not all the time
not every moment
but always

when you love each other
you can argue
and reason
and have patience
together
you move together
physically
psychically
molded to each other
a sensual sixth sense

when you love each other
you share each other
you know each other
better than you know

without you
there is a palpable vacuum
waiting
for you to fill it
again
as before
as always
as it should be
as it is supposed to be
its not the same world
without you

when you love each other
when you are apart
you are missing
your best part
you know
you belong together

you lie in bed
beside the empty space
without sleeping
you sit at the table
across from the empty space
without eating
you walk out the door
without embracing
the empty space

remembering
when
...you...
filled the empty space
when
...you...
held me in your embrace
when
...you...
slept beside me

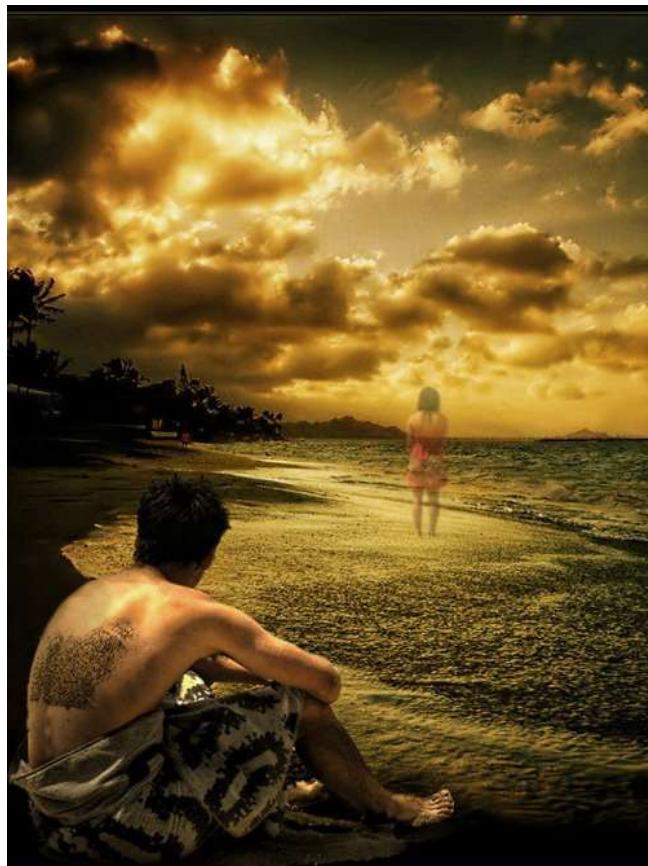
feeling the reassuring beat of your heart
with your bosom
pressed against my back
your loving arm draped over my shoulder
your breath hot on the nape of my neck
you were so soft and warm and real
and the world was real
and nourishing

when you love each other
its comforting
when
you know each other
like that

but when its gone
when you are gone
there is no comfort
wherever you roam
wherever
your company
is only the empty space
and shadows
quickly fading
evaporating
just like
the memory of
your hot breath
warming my cheek
on a cold winter morning



until
too late
you realize
you don't remember anymore
was it real?
did anyone ever sleep beside you?
you don't remember anymore
how it felt
was it real?
you don't know
for sure
all you do know
for sure
is
it felt better
before
so much better



I know that I'm not always
the easiest person in the world
to get along with...

There are times when I'm moody,
and, no matter what you do or say,
I'll find fault.

I know that, at times,
I push you to the point
where you feel that you
just can't win,
and you wonder what you
could possibly be doing wrong...

Well, it's not you, it's me.
I just can't understand
what someone as wonderful as you
could see in me,
and I get scared.

I'm afraid you'll suddenly see
all my flaws,
and fall out of love
with me.



From Maria, with you
in my mind for ever.

I know it's no excuse,
but those times
when I'm the most difficult
are probably the times
I'm loving you the most
and can't bear the thought
of life without you.

So, I am trying...
and I do love you...
more than anything
in the world.

to John

